NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0214 FEBRUARY 20, 1976
CHARLES MEDD

JOBS BILL -- FORD VETO UPHELD

ANNCR:

PRESIDENT FORD WON ANOTHER LEGISLATIVE BATTLE WITH CONGRESS (THIS) (LAST) WEEK WHEN THE UNITED STATES SENATE FAILED TO OVERTURN HIS VETO OF A MAJOR JOB-CREATION BILL. CHARLES MEDD HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS.

VOICE:

IN VETOING THE BILL, THE PRESIDENT SAID THE SIX THOUSAND MILLION DOLLAR PRICE TAG WAS TOO EXPENSIVE, THAT IT WAS THE WRONG WAY TO PUT AMERICANS BACK TO WORK, AND THAT CONGRESS WAS MORE INTERESTED IN ELECTION-YEAR VOTES THAN JOBS. A CLEAR MAJORITY OF THE CONGRESSMEN PAID NO ATTENTION TO MISTER FORD. THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES -- BY A THREE TO ONE MARGIN -- VOTED TO OVERRIDE HIS VETO, AND THE SENATE BY A SIXTY-THREE-TO-THIRTY-FIVE VOTE EXPRESSED THE SAME SENTIMENT. BUT THAT WAS THREE VOTES SHORT OF THE TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY REQUIRED BY BOTH HOUSES TO ENACT LEGISLATION OVER A PRESIDENTIAL VETO.

FOR MISTER FORD, THAT THREE-VOTE VICTORY COULD NOT HAVE COME AT A MORE TIMELY MOMENT. NEW HAMPSHIRE REPUBLICANS ARE ABOUT THE CAST THEIR BALLOTS IN THE HOTLY CONTESTED RACE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND FORMER CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR RONALD REAGAN. THE TWO MEN SEEM TO AGREE ON MOST ECONOMIC MATTERS -- BOTH WANT TO KEEP GOVERNMENT SPENDING DOWN -- BUT MISTER REAGAN HAS BEEN QUESTIONING THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP ABILITIES. A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE

NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY, MISTER FORD SHOWED HE CAN MARSHAL ENOUGH SUPPORT TO OUTMANEUVER THE HUGE DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL MAJORITIES.

IF WHAT HAPPENED ON CAPITOL HILL PLEASED THE WHITE HOUSE, THE JOY WAS FAR FROM UNIVERSAL. ORGANIZED LABOR -- ONE OF THE KEY SPONSORS OF THE JOB BILL -- CALLED THE PRESIDENT'S VETO AND THE SENATE'S DECISION TO SUSTAIN IT "A TRAGIC LOSS FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE." LABOR AND OTHER LIBERAL GROUPS ARE CONVINCED THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR GETTING THE UNEMPLOYED BACK TO WORK. THE TARGET FOR THE DEFEATED LEGISLATION WAS SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND NEW JOBS, MOSTLY IN URBAN PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMS.

BUT MISTER FORD BELIEVES THAT TARGET WAS OVERLY OPTIMISTIC, THAT THE COST TO THE TAX-PAYER WAS MUCH TOO HIGH, AND THAT SHORT-TERM GOVERNMENT JOBS ARE NOT THE ANSWER TO UNEMPLOYMENT. THAT ARGUMENT GAVE HIM A TACTICAL VICTORY ON THE EVE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES--A VICTORY THAT WILL STAND UP AS LONG AS THE NATION'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE CONTINUES TO DROP, AS IT HAS FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS. IF NOT, THE VOTERS MAY HAVE ANOTHER JUDGEMENT IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.

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